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ABSTRACT

Project Re-Entry was a follow-up study of the status of more than 5,000 former students of the Tri-County Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, who either never completed the entire General Educational Development (GED) test battery or completed the entire GED battery but still lacked enough points to earn a GED equivalency diploma. At the beginning of the project, OIC had a list of 851 students who had begun GED testing but not completed it. The list was checked and revised to eliminate duplicate names, names of deceased persons, and the 105 persons who had since completed GED testing. The 503 individuals remaining on the corrected list were contacted and offered the option of reentering OIC's traditional GED testing or receiving nontraditional homebound instruction, distance education, and tutor assistant instruction. The project implementer developed action plans for each of the 66 individuals who expressed a desire to continue GED training/testing. Of the 66 people, 27 returned to a traditional classroom setting and 23 worked through a home study course. Eleven of the 50 students took the GED, and 8 of the 11 passed it. (Appended are various project-related forms, correspondence, and questionnaires and demographic data on the identified GED noncompleters.) (MN)

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ED 367 865

Project Re-Entry

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Fiscal Year 1991 - 1992

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of Tri-County OIC's Project Re-Entry was to identify the status of Tri-County OIC students who have been labeled "non-completers." A non-completer is defined as any student who has taken at least one of the official GED tests, but has not completed the entire test battery, or has completed the test battery but still lacks enough points to be awarded a GED equivalency diploma. In addition, a non-completer is not currently enrolled in a GED class.

It was the task of the project implementor to update OIC's list of non-completers. The project implementor identified those who had completed GED testing after leaving Tri-County OIC, and assisted those who wished to continue GED testing, either in traditional GED classes, or with non-traditional homebound instruction, distance education, or tutor assistant instruction. The project implementor also tracked the progress of each student contacted as a result of this project.

This report should be of interest to other adult education agencies who have large numbers of GED students who have not completed the GED testing process.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last 25 years, Tri-County OIC has been actively involved in adult education. Specifically we have taught GED test preparation to over 5,000 students, most of whom have received their GED equivalency diploma. Many others, however, have begun taking the GED tests, but, for any number of reasons, have not completed. At the beginning of the project, OIC had a list of 851 students who had begun testing but have not completed. Through the activities of this project, Tri-County OIC contacted these students and attempted to "re-enter" them into our training program.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives for this project were:

- to identify former students who (a) have completed testing, (b) wish to continue testing, or (c) do not wish to continue at this time.
- to re-enter, either in traditional classes, homebound tutoring, or distance education programs no fewer than 80% of those students who indicate that they wish to continue GED testing.
- to track student progress.
- to develop a follow-up procedures' manual and guidelines for teachers and counselors to use for students who have not completed GED testing and are no longer enrolled in class.
- to review, implement and disseminate the procedures' manual.

TIME TABLE

Month 1 ..... Meet with involved staff to explain the goals and objectives of the project.

Month 2 ..... Develop list of partial completers.

Month 3 ..... Contact PDE GED testing services for help in updating list.

Month 4 Finalize list.

Month 5 ..... Make data base of partial completers to include: address, partial GED test scores, TABE test results, etc.

Month 6 ..... Contact students on list via phone/mail. Conduct survey of those who express an interest in completing GED testing.

Month 7 ..... Assess the results of the survey. Determine students' needs.

Month 8 ..... Assign students to course of action (traditional classes, homebound tutoring, distance education).

Month 9 ..... Develop questionnaire. Follow up on students' progress.

Month 10 ..... Follow up on students' progress.

Month 11 ..... Administer questionnaire. Meet with staff for project feedback. Write final report for PDE.

Month 12 ..... Disseminate final products.

KEY PERSONNEL

Jeffrey Woodyard, Executive Director for Tri-County OIC, served as Project Supervisor for this grant. Lee Knisely, served as Project Implementor.

AUDIENCE AND DISSEMINATION

While this project was designed to have specific applicability for Tri-County OIC staff and students, the general nature of the objectives and the tasks performed makes it easily adaptable by most adult education service providers.

Copies of this report and its products may be obtained from the

Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

333 Market Street

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17126-0333

or the

AdvancE Resource Center

333 Market Street

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17126-0333

Statement of Problem

OIC had a list of over 800 non completers. OIC counselors and instructors wanted to make an effort to reach those students who they felt could complete GED testing, but were no longer attending class. The list needed to be updated and corrected. Students who were still interested in completing GED testing had to be identified, contacted, and presented with their options.

STEP I

STUDENT IDENTIFICATION

Official GED test scores (those received from various GED testing sites or from the Department of Education) are kept on a simple data base. The names of students who had not completed testing could be pulled from the data base. A total of 851 students were identified as non-completers.

STEP II

STUDENT GED SCORE VERIFICATION

The data base was checked for accuracy. The project implementor checked for duplicate files, correct spelling of names, correct social security numbers, and most recent addresses. Missing or incomplete data was taken from student applications that are kept in permanent student files. Throughout this project, the data base was modified and updated as necessary.

After the data base was corrected, a printout was obtained. The printout was circulated among staff. At this point, staff was able to visually scan the list and identify students who they knew had completed testing but were still on the non-completers' list. Staff was also able to identify, to some extent, incorrect and/or missing addresses and phone numbers.

Through this process, the staff identified 12 duplicate names and 7 students (1%) who were deceased. Another 218 students had incomplete addresses. All of these names were removed from the contact list. This completed the internal verification process.

The external verification process consisted of sending lists of student names, social security numbers, and approximate testing dates to the Pennsylvania Department of Education's, GED Testing Division. The workers at the GED Testing Division checked the accuracy of the scores. (It is important to note that OIC students are asked to sign a waiver form allowing OIC staff to inquire about their test results both from the testing center and the Pennsylvania Department of Education.) (See Appendix 1.)

The GED Testing Division sent Tri-County OIC an official printout of each student's GED test scores. (See Appendix 2.) Using these official GED scores, the data base was again updated. For various reasons, not all the students' scores were located on the Department of Education's computer data base. Some were not found due to incomplete or incorrect social security numbers. In several cases, scores had not been reported to the Department of Education by the test site. In these cases, because OIC kept a written report from the test site listing each student's score and the date(s) the tests were taken, OIC was able to work with the Department of Education to correct the problem.

STEP III

DATA BASE UPDATE

Using the official scores from the Department of Education, the partial score data base was updated. Additional scores were added and incorrect scores were fixed. After receiving the official report from the Department of Education, OIC found that 105 students (12%) of the original 851 had completed their GED. These 105 were removed from the non-completers list and placed on the cumulative GED list.

After updating the data base, a copy of the student's official GED scores was placed in each student's file.

STEP IV

STUDENT CONTACT

A contact letter was written and sent to the remaining 509 students on the non-completers' list. (See Appendix 3.) Agencies who have access to word processing equipment will find this task easy. OIC used *WordPerfect*'s merge feature to merge the form letter with the students' addresses. Each letter appeared to be personalized, and as a result, probably received closer scrutiny by the students.

The letter explained the need for each student to complete the GED. The student was given these options:

⇨ return to class
⇨ sign up for testing
⇨ receive practice GED tests
⇨ choose not to pursue completing the GED test at this time.

A copy of the student's official scores and a postcard (See Appendix 4.) were included with each letter. Seventy-five (75) letters (14%) were returned as undeliverable.

Some students were contacted by telephone, others at home, and several were visited at their work site. The project implementor also asked other students to try to contact their former classmates.

A student contact form (See Appendix 5.) was developed and kept on each student who returned the postcard, called to respond, or made a personal visit to OIC. As the postcards were returned, students were contacted by telephone with information about:

(a) class schedules for those who wanted to return to class
(b) practice GED testing if the student was not able to return to class
(c) testing schedules for the actual GED test
(d) individual tutoring
(e) homebound study

STEP V

STUDENT ACTION PLANS

After receiving the postcards, phone calls, or visits from the interested students, the project implementor worked with each of the students to identify which service option would best fit their needs.

Option A: *Class schedules for those who wanted to return to class.* This option was for those students who wished to return to a structured GED class. OIC offers classes at over 20 sites. Students can attend classes Monday through Friday from 9 am until 8 pm. Because of the wide availability of classes, most students who wanted to return to class could be accommodated. Twenty-seven students who returned their postcards chose this option. It is interesting to note, however, that 59 other students, who did not return their postcards, also returned to class.

Option B: *Practice GED testing, if the student was not able to return to class.* This option was for students who did not want to return to class but felt that they could pass the GED test. Students in this category were asked to take the *Test for Adult Basic Education* (TABE) and the *Official GED Practice Test* (Steck Vaughn Book Company). Even though the tests are designed to be timed, they could not be because most tests were self-administered by the students in their home. OIC felt, however, that some measure of the student's ability to complete GED-level work was needed; consequently, copies of the two tests were sent to each student who was interested in completing the GED but was unable to come to school to be tested. The test results were used, along with teacher input, to decide if students could pass the GED test without any class-instructed preparation, study on their own or if one-on-one tutoring would be more appropriate. The tests results were also used to help select study materials. Thirty-five students completed this option.

Option C: *Testing schedules for the actual GED test.* This option was available for students who completed Option B and were determined to be able to complete the testing process with little or no test preparation. Students were assisted in the registration process. Test dates were assigned and the results were recorded onto the appropriate data base. Eleven students participated in this option.

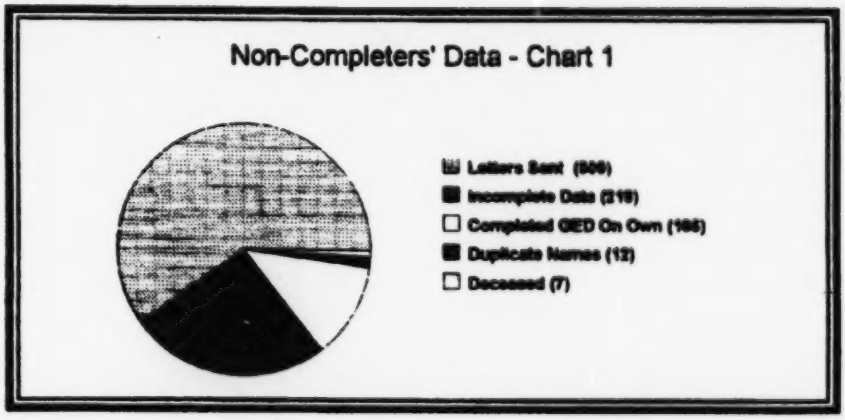
Option D: *Individual tutoring.* Non-completers who were unable to attend class for any reason, i.e., child care problems, work schedule conflicts, lack of transportation, or other reasons, and needed one-on-one instruction because of their academic level, were tutored on an individual basis. Tutoring was available on a limited basis and only after all other options had been exhausted. Twelve students received individual tutoring.

Option E: *Homebound study.* Students who had taken the TABE test, were determined to be capable of completing GED-level work at home, did not need a tutor, and could not attend classes, were considered to be homebound. Students could pick up materials to study at home or have the materials mailed to them. Students were encouraged to call OIC or stop in when they needed help or when they had general questions or concerns. Twenty-three students studied at home.

STEP VI

COLLECTING AND INTERPRETING DATA

The project implementor was responsible for collecting data for this project. What follows is a brief overview of the significant findings. (All percentages are based on the 509 eligible participants.) Even though our list began with 851 non-completers, it quickly was reduced to 509 non completers by eliminating the following groups:



*** 218 (26%) who had incomplete addresses and/or phone numbers**

The project implementor was unable to locate complete information even after a thorough search of the student files. The majority of the students who

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fell into this category had attended classes prior to 1980 when records were kept manually.

*** 105 (12%) who had subsequently completed GED testing**

This number was surprisingly high. It would be interesting to determine what factors made these people continue the testing process. Some, we are sure, completed their testing at other adult education centers, while others completed on their own. One student had completed a correspondence course for her high school diploma. This project, however, did not make an effort to study this group of learners. These students were removed from the partial score data base and added to the cumulative GED data base.

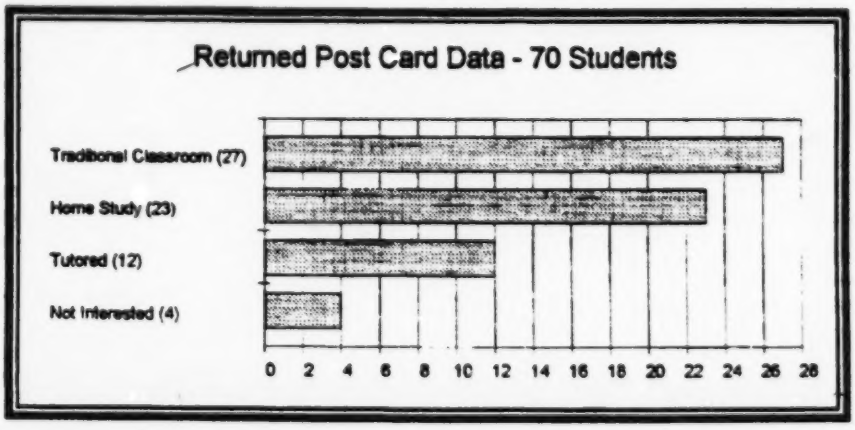
*** 12 (01%) who were determined to be duplicate names**

These students had misspelled names and incorrect social security numbers that, on first sight, made them appear to be separate individuals.

*** 7 (01%) who were deceased**

Letters were sent to the 509 students for whom we had complete addresses. Of the 509 letters mailed, 75 (15%) letters were returned as undeliverable. Information gained from teachers, friends of students, and family members verified that 11 of these 75 students had moved to other states. It was learned that one of these students was working on completing her GED test in the Philadelphia area.

Seventy students (14%) returned their postcards. Four (06%) indicated that they were not interested in completing their GED at this time. One of these students was unable to attend class because of an incompatible work schedule. The other 66 (94%) indicated that they would like to finish taking their GED tests. These students were contacted by telephone. Twenty-seven of these 66 students (41%) returned to a traditional classroom setting. Twenty-three (35%) of the 66 stu-


Returned Post Card Data - 70 Students
Traditional Classroom (27)
Home Study (23)
Tutored (12)
Not Interested (4)
0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24 26 28

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dents who returned their postcards worked through a home study course which included taking the *Official GED Practice Test* and completing assigned lessons from various GED textbooks. Student and instructor kept in touch via the telephone and site visits. Of this group of 50 students, 11 (22%) students signed up for GED testing. Eight of the 11 (73%) passed the GED test, two of whom participated in Tri-County OIC's annual GED graduation ceremony. One of these students has entered a typing/word processing class and another will be entering a similar program in the fall of 1992.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The mass mailing was the initial contact made with the students. While a greater response to this mailing was anticipated, it can be concluded that even this minimal effort can produce results. All of the students who responded by mail received a follow up phone call. It was these students who responded more positively when given their options for completing GED testing. Not surprisingly, the more personal the approach the better the response. However, just sending out the letters and postcards gave some students the assurance that the option for completing their GED testing was still open. Many students returned to class, even though they did not return the postcards. After interviewing several students who chose not to return to class, it was evident that these students, who had previously been in adult education classes, exhibited the same kinds of reluctance to participate that new students do. The students cited these as reasons for not wanting to attend formal classes:

- ☆ worried about people "looking down" on them because they aren't as smart as others
- ☆ concerned about their age -- felt that they are too old to learn or that it has been many years since they were in an educational system
- ☆ feared testing
- ☆ feared that they would not be able to reach their goals.

Other traditional barriers to participation were also mentioned:

- ☆ transportation problems
- ☆ child care problems
- ☆ conflicting work schedules
- ☆ conflicting family schedules

☆ financial problems

Some of these students who were reluctant or unable to come to class were helped. The project implementor served as a mock counselor to help the students identify alternative opportunities if they were not able to attend class. It was evident that students required constant support and reinforcement from teachers and other students. Students were supportive of each other and anxious for their classmates to succeed.

In conclusion, this project turned out to be quite beneficial for OIC students. This project allowed an OIC staff person to dedicate time to re-enrolling former OIC students and in doing so, identify those characteristics of students who are most likely to succeed in such an effort. It is hoped that increased retention, more aggressive student follow up activities, and more intense academic counseling will result from this project.

Student Release Form

I hereby give the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and/or any GED testing center where I have take a GED test, permission to release my GED test scores and related information to:

Tri-County Opportunities Industrialization Center, Inc.

1600 Market Street

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17103

(717) 238-7318

Signature:_____ Social Security:_____ Date:_____

Appendix 2

Sample Student Test Results Form

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
333 MARKET STREET
HARRISBURG, PA 17126-0333

Your Student's Name &

Address

DATE: 02-20-92
GED I.D. NO:
DATE OF BIRTH: 08-29-63

DEAR NATE,

The following is an OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT of your scores on the General Educational Development Test.

Date of Withdrawal from School	Last Grade Completed
00-80	10

Test	Form	Standard Score	Percentile Rank for U. S.	
Test #1	MP	41	20	Writing Skills
Test #2	MP	49	46	Social Studies
Test #3	MP	46	35	Science
Test #4	MP	54	65	Reading Skills
Test #5	MP	46	35	Mathematics
Total		236		

Standard Score Average 47.2 Date Of Last Test: 10/15/84

Pennsylvania resident passed. Issued diploma no. 2983030 on 10/24/84.

The Commonwealth Diploma program requires a total score of 225 or more, an average score of 45 or more and no single test score less than 35. An applicant who has not qualified for the diploma may test again following a waiting period of 90 days. Test Center Directors are available for advice, information and sources of assistance for self-study or instruction relating to low score areas. Retesting requires a new application marked "RETEST". The best scores from each test are used to determine eligibility for a diploma. DUPLICATE DIPLOMAS ARE NOT ISSUED.

If you have any questions, please direct them to:

COMMONWEALTH DIPLOMA PROGRAM
PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
333 MARKET STREET
HARRISBURG, PA 17126-0333
TELEPHONE 717-787-6747

Marian Chesney, Supervisor
Commonwealth Diploma Program

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Appendix 3

Sample Student Contact Letter

January 2, 1992

1"

Dear 2"

OIC needs your help! I am following up on our former **OIC** students who have taken one or more sections of the GED test, but have not completed testing. If you haven't already done so, **OIC** would like to help you complete the GED testing process. A copy of your current GED scores is attached.

There are several ways you can complete your GED testing. Please consider one of these options:

1. Return to GED classes at one of our 25 sites.
2. Take a practice GED test to see if you are ready for testing without having to attend classes.
3. Set up a date to be scheduled for GED testing at one of the three test sites: HACC, York Vo-Tech, or Penn State-Harrisburg.

Please, take a moment to complete the enclosed postcard and mail it back to **OIC** (no postage necessary, just drop it in a mailbox). I will get in touch with you right away.

If you are eager to get started or if you have any questions, call me at 238-7318. I am usually at this number Monday through Thursday between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. (Please, leave a message if I'm not available).

I hope to hear from you soon. We want you to get your GED.

Sincerely

Lee Knisely

Attachment

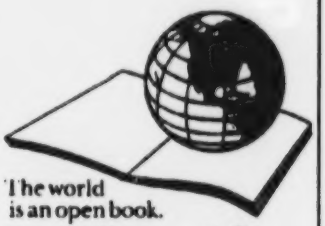
Enclosure

pc: student file

Appendix 4

Sample Student Post Card

Your School
321 Market Street
Our Town, USA 54321



USA 19

John Doe
123 Main Street
Anytown, USA 12345

Name _____ Phone _____

Check all that apply:

_____ 1. I would like to attend a GED class.

_____ 2. I would like to take a practice GED test.

_____ 3. I would like to sign up for GED testing.

_____ 4. I am not interested in completing my GED at this time.

Sample Student Contact Form

NAME_____

PHONE_____

ADDRESS_____

- 1. _____GED - COMPLETED
  _____NOT COMPLETED

- 2. _____NOT INTERESTED IN TESTING AT THIS TIME

- 3. _____WANTS TO TAKE (List test(s)_____
  TESTS NEEDED TO TAKE:

  _____ SEND TESTING APPLICATION
  _____TESTING DATE REQUESTED (Circle one)
  (TUES. PM OR SATURDAY)
  _____MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR TESTING
  _____NEEDS MONETARY ASSISTANCE
  _____NEEDS TRANSPORTATION
  _____NEEDS FOLLOW UP (Detail what needs to be followed up):

- 4. SEND PRACTICE TESTS (List) _____
  _____
  _____ SEND WORK (Detail)_____
  _____
  _____ FOLLOW UP ASSISTANCE HELP GIVEN

- 6. WANTS TO RETURN TO CLASS_____ SITE_____
  _____ FOLLOW UP WITH TEACHER

Appendix 6

Student Data Base Fields

General Information

Name

Address

City

State

Zip

Phone

Age

Race

LAD

GED Information

WritSklls

SocStud

Taken

Science

LitArt

Avg

Math

Total

Follow Up Information

MPC

INT

SPT

RTC

TGED

RPC

NINT

UDL

Comments

Student Data Base Field Descriptions

General Information

Name

Address

City

State

Zip Code

Phone

Age

Race

Last **A**ttendance **D**ate

GED Information

Writing Skills Test

Science Test

Mathematics Test

Social Studies Test

Literature & Arts Test

Total for Test Scores

Date **Taken**

Average Test Score

Follow Up Information

Mailed Post Card

Returned Post Card

INTerested in Finishing

Not INTerested

UnDeLivearble

Sent Pre-Test

Reurned To Class

Took GED Test

Comments

Appendix B

Student Questionnaire

1. Why do you want to complete your GED?

2. What made you decide to return to class or continue with your education?

3. How do you feel about returning to class?

4. How do you feel about studying at home for your GED?

5. What are some of the barriers that you face when trying to study at home? In a classroom?

Appendix 9

6. Do you have any fears about education or learning?

7. How does your family feel about your returning to school?

8. Do you plan to continue your education beyond the GED?

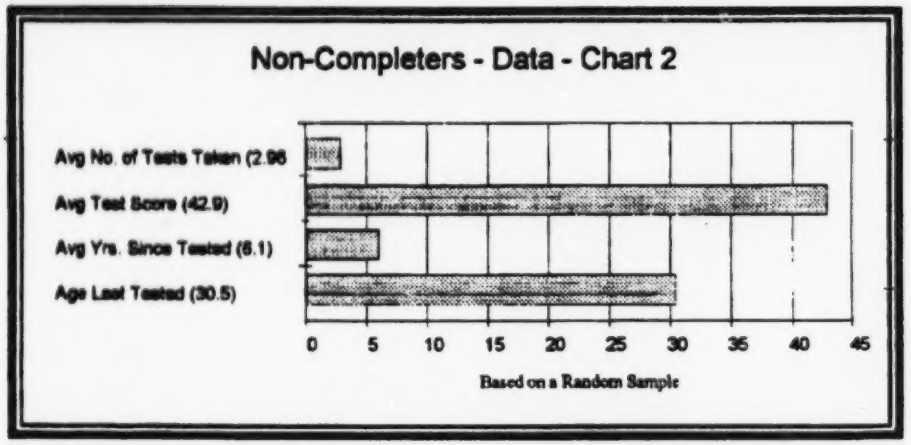
9. Has not having a GED affected your employment goals?

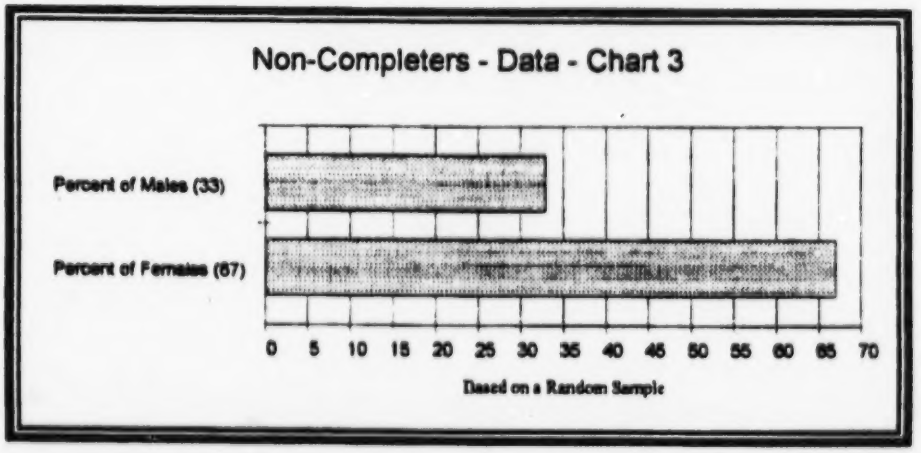
10. Is there anything that we can do to help you reach your academic or vocational goals?

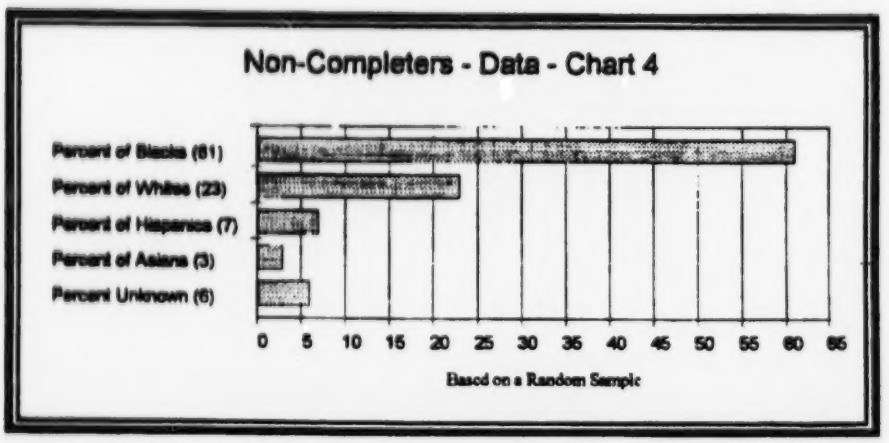
Sample Re-Entry Check List

- ✓ List of students who have not completed GED testing
- ✓ Student files to include: previous GED test scores, social security number, address, and phone number
- ✓ Local GED testing center contact person to help verify test scores and to schedule GED testing
- ✓ Pennsylvania Department of Education, GED Testing Services, contact person
- ✓ A inquiry form asking PDE, GED staff and the local testing center staff to verify GED test scores
- ✓ Student GED score release form
- ✓ Student contact form
- ✓ Computer data base or a manual data information system
- ✓ A word processing program that includes mail merginng features
- ✓ Addresses for out-of-state Department of Education GED testing offices

Non-Completers' Data


Non-Completers - Data - Chart 2
Avg No. of Tests Taken (2.96
Avg Test Score (42.9)
Avg Yrs. Since Tested (6.1)
Age Last Tested (30.5)
0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45
Based on a Random Sample


Non-Completers - Data - Chart 3
Percent of Males (33)
Percent of Females (67)
0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70
Based on a Random Sample


Non-Completers - Data - Chart 4
Percent of Blacks (61)
Percent of Whites (23)
Percent of Hispanics (7)
Percent of Asians (3)
Percent Unknown (6)
0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65
Based on a Random Sample